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SECURITY COUNCIL
Forty-ninth year

Letter dated 25 February 1994 from the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to the Secretary-General

In my capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, I wish to draw your most urgent attention to the tragic massacre of unarmed Palestinian worshippers in Hebron today.

The Cable News Network (CNN) has confirmed that an American-born Jewish settler from Qiryat Arba, armed with a machine gun and wearing a uniform of the Israeli Reserve, entered the Hebron Mosque during prayer and proceeded to shoot, in cold blood, at the Palestinian worshippers, killing over 50 and wounding at least 100. Unconfirmed reports indicate that the Israeli troops guarding the Mosque did not intervene to stop the attack for over 10 minutes.

In the wake of this massacre, violence has spread elsewhere in the occupied Palestinian territory and clashes were reported at the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem and in Gaza and other areas. The Committee is seriously concerned at reports of shootings by Israeli soldiers against Palestinian demonstrators.

The Committee condemns the massacre in the strongest terms. It wishes to remind the international community that, as long as Israeli forces occupy the Palestinian territory, Israel bears sole responsibility for the protection of Palestinians, as the occupying Power in accordance with the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949.

The Committee has noted statements of Israeli leaders, in particular Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, expressing regret and sorrow to Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat and condemning the act as murder. The Committee calls on the Israeli Government to take immediate action to control and disarm the settlers and others opposed to the recent agreements and to restrain the actions of its soldiers in order to defuse tension and restore credibility to the peace process. Moreover, the Committee believes that only

rapid and consistent progress in the current negotiations leading to the disengagement of Israeli forces and self-rule for Palestinians will prevent the current situation from deteriorating even further. The Committee calls on all concerned to do everything possible to surmount the current obstacles and to advance towards full implementation of the agreements that have been reached.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter circulated as a document of the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 35, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Kéba Birane CISSÉ
Chairman
Committee on the Exercise
of the Inalienable Rights
of the Palestinian People